

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JESUS

NO. 1570

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it."
Luke 19:41.*

ON three occasions we are told that Jesus wept. You know them well, but it may be worth while to refresh your memories. The first was when our Lord was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. He saw the sorrow of the sisters, He meditated upon the fruit of sin in the death and corruption of the body, and He groaned in spirit, and it is written that "Jesus wept." Those who divided the chapters did well to make a separate verse of that simple sentence. It stands alone, the smallest and yet in some respects the greatest verse in the whole Bible. It shines as a diamond of the first water. It contains a world of healing balm condensed into a drop. Here we have much in little, a wealth of meaning in two words.

The second occasion we have before us, and we will make it the theme of our discourse, at the sight of the beloved but rebellious city Jesus wept. The third occasion is mentioned by the apostle Paul in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, where he tells us what else we might not have known, that the Savior, "in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." That passage relates to the Gethsemane agony, in which a shower of bitter tears was mingled with the bloody sweat. The strength of His love strove with the anguish of His soul, and in the process forced forth the sacred waters of His eyes.

Thus our Savior wept in *sympathy with domestic sorrow*, and sanctified the tears of the bereaved. We, too, may weep when brothers and friends lie dead, for Jesus wept. There need not be rebellion in our mourning, for Jesus fully consented to the divine will, and yet He wept. We may weep at the graves of those we love, and yet be guiltless of unbelief as to their resurrection, for Jesus knew that Lazarus would rise again, and yet He wept. Our Lord, in weeping over Jerusalem, showed His *sympathy with national troubles*, His distress at the evils which awaited His countrymen. Men should not cease to be patriots when they become believers, saints should bemoan the ills which come upon the guilty people among whom they are numbered, and do so all the more because they are saints.

Our Lord's third weeping was induced by *the great burden of human guilt* which pressed upon Him. This shows us how we too, should look upon the guilt of men and mourn over it before God, but in this special weeping Jesus is alone, there was a something in the tears of Gethsemane to which we cannot reach, for He who shed them was then beginning to suffer as our substitute, and in that case He must needs tread the winepress alone, and of the people there must be none with Him. Behold beneath the olive trees a solitary weeper, enduring a grief which, blessed be His name, is now impossible to us, seeing He has taken away the transgressions which called for it.

We will now turn to this second instance of our Savior's weeping, and here we find when we look at the original word that it is not exactly expressed by the word used in our admirable English version. We there read, "He beheld the city, and *wept* over it," but the Greek means a great deal more than tears, and includes sobs and cries. Perhaps it may be best to read it, "He lamented over it." He suffered a deep inward anguish, and He expressed it by signs of woe, and by words which showed how bitter was His grief.

Our subject will not be the lamentations of Jeremiah, but the lamentations of Jesus, the lamentations of Him who could more truly say than the weeping prophet, "I am the man that has seen affliction by the

rod of His wrath. My eye runs down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me.” Jesus is here a king by general acclamation, but king of grief by personal lamentation. He is the sovereign of sorrow, weeping while riding in triumph in the midst of His followers. Looked He ever more kingly than when He showed the tenderness of His heart towards His rebellious subjects? The city which had been the metropolis of the house of David never saw so truly a royal man before, for He is fittest to rule who is most ready to sympathize.

We shall this morning, as God shall help us, first, consider *our Lord’s inward grief*, and then, secondly, *His verbal lamentation*. Oh for the power of the Spirit to bless the meditation to the melting of all our hearts. O Lord, speak to the rock and bid the waters flow, or, if it please You better, strike it with Your rod and make it gush with rivers, only in some way make us answer to the mourning of our Savior.

*“Did Christ o’er sinners weep,
And shall our cheeks be dry?
Let floods of penitential grief
Burst forth from every eye.”*

I. First, we are to contemplate OUR LORD’S INWARD GRIEF.

We note concerning it that it was so intense that *it could not be restrained by the occasion*. The occasion was one entirely by itself, a brief gleam of sunlight in a cloudy day, a glimpse of summer amid a cruel winter. His disciples had brought the colt and had placed Him thereon, and He was riding to the city which was altogether moved at His coming. The multitudes were eager to do Him homage with waving branches and loud hosannas, while His disciples in the inner circle were exulting in songs of praise which almost emulated the angelic chorales of His birth night. “Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill toward men,” found its echo when the disciples said, “Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.”

Yet amidst the hosannas of the multitude, while the palm branches were yet in many hands, the Savior stopped to weep, on the very spot where David had gone centuries before weeping, the Son of David stayed awhile to look upon the city, and to pour out His lamentation. That must have been deep grief which ran counter to all the demands of the season, and violated, as it were, all the decorum of the occasion, turning a festival into a mourning, a triumph into a lament.

Ah! He knew the hollowness of all the praises which were ringing in His ears, He knew that they who shouted hosanna today would, ere many suns had risen, cry, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” He knew that His joyous entrance into Jerusalem would be followed by a mournful procession out of it, when they would take Him to the cross that He might die. He saw amid all the effervescence of the moment the small residuum of sincerity that there was in it, and He accepted it, but He lamented the abundance of mere outward excitement, which would disappear like the froth of the sea, and so He stood and wept. It was a great sorrow, surely, which turned such a day of hopefulness into a season of anguish.

It strikes me that all that day the Savior fasted, and if so, it is singular that He should have purposely kept for Himself a fast while others on His account held a festival. The reason why He did so, I think, is this, Mark says, “And now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon. “Such hunger had not come upon Him if it had not been preceded by a fast the day before.

See, then, your Lord surrounded, as it were, with billows of praise in the midst of a tumultuous sea of exultation, Himself standing as a lone rock, unmoved by all the excitement around Him. Deep was the grief which could not be concealed or controlled on such a day, when the sincere congratulations of His disciples, the happy songs of children, and the loud hosannas of the multitude everywhere welcomed Him.

The greatness of His grief may be seen, again, by the fact that *it overmastered other very natural feelings* which might have been, and perhaps were, excited by the occasion. Our Lord stood on the brow of the hill where He could see Jerusalem before Him in all its beauty. What thoughts it awakened in Him! His memory was stronger and quicker than ours, for His mental powers were unimpaired by sin, and He could remember all the great and glorious things which had been spoken of Zion, the city of God. Yet, as He remembered them all, no joy came into His soul because of the victories of David or the pomp of Solomon, temple and tower had lost all charm for Him, “the joy of the earth” brought no joy to Him, but at the sight of the venerable city and its holy and beautiful house He wept.

Modern travelers who have any soul in them are always moved by the sublimity of the spectacle from the Mount of Olives. Dean Stanley wrote, “Nothing at Rome, Memphis, Thebes, Constantinople, or Athens can approach it in beauty or interest,” and yet this is the poor, mean Jerusalem of modern times, by no means to be compared with the Jerusalem of our Savior’s day. Yet the Lord Jesus says nothing about this city, “Beautiful for situation,” except to lament over it. If He counts the towers thereof, and marks well her bulwarks, it is only to bemoan their total overthrow. All the memories of the past did but swell the torrent of His anguish in the foresight of her doom.

Something of admiration may have entered the Savior’s holy breast, for before Him stood His Father’s house, of which He still thought so much, that even though He knew it would be left desolate, yet He took pains to purge it once again of the buyers and sellers who polluted it. That temple was built of white marble and much of it, the roof especially, covered with slabs of gold. It must have been one of the fairest objects that ever human eye rested upon as it glittered in the sun before Him.

But what were those great and costly stones? What were those curious carvings to Him? His heart was saying within itself, “There shall not be one stone left upon another that shall not be thrown down.” His sadness at the foresight of the city’s desolation mastered His natural feeling of admiration for its present glory. His sorrow found no alleviation either in the past or the present of the city’s history, the dreadful future threw a pall over all.

It mastered, too, the sympathy which He usually felt for those who were about Him. He would not stop His disciples from rejoicing, though the Pharisees asked Him, but He, Himself, took no share in the joy. Usually He was the most sensitive of men to all who were around Him, sorrowing with their sorrow and joying in their joy. But on this occasion they may wave their palms, and cut down branches of trees and strew them in the way, and the children may shout Hosanna, but He who was the center of it all did not enter into the feeling of the hour, they triumph, but He weeps.

More striking still is the fact that His grief for others prevented all apprehension for Himself. As He beheld that city, knowing that within a week He would die outside its gates, He might naturally have begun to feel the shadow of His sufferings, but no trace of such emotion is discoverable. You and I in such a case, with the certainty of a speedy and ignominious death before us, would have been heavy about it, but Jesus was not. In all that flood of tears there was not one for His own death, the tears were all for Jerusalem’s doom, even as He said afterwards, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children.”

It is not “Woe is me, the holy city will become an Aceldama, a field of blood by my slaughter,” but “Oh, if you had known, even you, in this your day.” He grieves for others, not for Himself, yet it must have been a very intense emotion which thus swept away, as with a torrent, everything else, so that He had neither joy for joy, nor sorrow for sorrow, but His whole strength of feeling was poured forth from one sluice, and ran in one channel towards the devoted city which had rejected Him, and was about to put Him to death.

This great sorrow of His reveals to us the nature of our Lord. How complex is the person of Christ! He foresaw that the city would be destroyed, and though He was divine He wept. He knew every single event and detail of the dreadful tragedy, and used words about it of special historical accuracy which bring out His prophetic character, and yet the eye so clear in seeing the future was almost blinded with

tears. He speaks of Himself as willing and able to have averted this doom by gathering the guilty ones under His wing, and thus He intimates His Godhead.

While His nature on the one side of it sees the certainty of the doom, the same nature from another side laments the dread necessity. I will not say that His Godhead foresaw and His manhood lamented, for so mysteriously is the manhood joined to the Godhead that it makes but one person, and it were better to assert that the entire nature of Christ lamented over Jerusalem.

I have never been able to believe in an impassive God, though many theologians lay it down as an axiom that God cannot suffer. It seems to me that He can do or endure anything He wills to do or endure, and I for one cannot see that there is any special glorifying of God in the notion that He is incapable in any direction whatever. We can only speak of Him after the manner of men, and after that manner He speaks of Himself, and therefore there is no wrong in so doing.

It brings the great Father nearer when we see Him lamenting the wanderings of His children, and joying in their penitent return. What but sorrow can be meant by such expressions as these? "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver you, Israel? how shall I make you as Admah? how shall I set you as Zeboim? my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, my people does not consider." Are these the utterances of an unfeeling God? I believe it is the Christ, the entire Christ that both foretells the doom of Jerusalem and laments it.

Some have even been staggered at the statement that Jesus wept. Certain of the early Christians, I am sorry to say, even went the length of striking the passage out of the Gospel, because they thought that weeping would dishonor their Lord. They ought to have had more reverence for the inspired Word, and a truer knowledge of their Master, and never to have wished to obliterate a record which reflects the highest honor upon man's Redeemer.

Our Lord's lament gives us an insight into the great tenderness of His character, He is so tender, that He not only weeps while weeping is of any avail, but He laments when lamentation must be fruitless. He reminds me of a judge who, having before been a friend, warning, persuading, pleading with the prisoner, at last has the unutterable pain of condemning him, he puts on the black cap, and with many a sigh and tear, pronounces sentence, feeling the dreadful nature of the occasion far more than the criminal at the bar. He is overcome with emotion while he declares that the condemned must be taken to the place from whence he came and there die a felon's death. Oh the tender heart of Christ, that when it comes to pronouncing the inevitable sentence, "Your house is left unto you desolate," yet He cannot utter the righteous words without lamentation.

In this our Lord reveals the very heart of God. Did He not say, "He that has seen *me* has seen the Father"? Here, then, you see the Father Himself, even He who said of old, "As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." The doom *must be* pronounced, for infinite justice demands it, but mercy laments what she was not permitted to prevent. Tears fall amid the thunders, and though the doom be sealed by obstinate impenitence, yet judgment is evidently strange work to the patient judge.

This anguish showed how dreadful was the sentence, for what could stir the Savior so if the doom of sinners be a small affair? If the doom of guilt be such a trifle as some dream, I understand not whence these tears. The whole nature of Christ is convulsed as He thinks first of Jerusalem plowed as a field, and her children slaughtered till their blood runs in rivers of gore, and next, as He beholds the doom of the ungodly, who must be driven from His presence, and from the glory of His power to be the awful witnesses of divine justice, and of God's hatred of evil. Thus standing on the brow of Olivet the weeping Son of man reveals to us the heart of God, slow to anger, of great mercy, waiting to be gracious, and tardy in executing His wrath.

For a practical lesson, we may remark that *this weeping of the Savior should much encourage men to trust Him.* Those who desire His salvation may approach Him without hesitation, for His tears prove His

heartily desires for our good. When a man who is not given to sentimental tears, as some effeminate beings are, is seen to weep, we are convinced of his sincerity. When a strong man is passionately convulsed from head to foot, and pours out lamentations, you feel that he is in downright earnest, and if that earnestness be manifested on your behalf you can commit yourself to him.

Oh, weeping sinner, fear not to come to a weeping Savior! If you will not come to Jesus, it grieves Him, that you have not come long ago has wrung His heart, that you are still away from Him is His daily sorrow, come, then, to Him without delay. Let His tears banish your fears, yea, He gives you better encouragement than tears, for He has shed for sinners, not drops from His eyes alone, but from His heart. He died that sinners who believe in Him might live. His whole body was covered with bloody sweat when He agonized for you, how can you doubt His readiness to receive you?

The five scars that still remain upon His blessed person, up there at the Father's right hand, all invite you to approach Him. These dumb mouths most eloquently entreat you to draw near and trust in Him whom God has set forth as the propitiation for sin. How shall He that wept and bled and died for sinners repulse a sinner who comes to Him at His bidding? Oh, come, come, come, I pray you, even now, to the weeping sinner's Friend.

This, too, I think is *an admonishment to Christian workers*. Some of us long ago came to Jesus, and we now occupy ourselves with endeavoring to bring others to Him, in this blessed work our Lord instructs us by His example. Brothers and sisters, if we would have others come to Jesus we must be like Jesus in tenderness, we must be meek, lowly, gentle, and sympathetic, and we must be moved to deep emotion at the thought that any should perish. Never let us speak of the doom of the wicked harshly, flippantly, or without holy grief, the loss of heaven and the endurance of hell must always be themes for tears. That men should live without Christ is grief enough, but that they should die without Christ is an overwhelming horror, which should grind our hearts to powder before God and make us fall on our faces and cry, "O God, have mercy upon them, and save them, for Your grace and for Your love's sake."

The deepest tenderness, it may be, some of us have yet to learn. Perhaps we are passing through a school in which we shall be taught it, and if we do but learn it we need not care how severe the instructive discipline may require to be. We ought not to look upon this city of London without tears, nor even upon a single sinner without sorrow. We must preach tenderly, and teach tenderly, if we would win souls. We are not to weep continually, for even Jesus did not do that, yet are we always to feel a tender love towards men, so that we would be ready to die for them if we might but save them from the wrath to come, and bring them into the haven of the Savior's rest.

Let me add that I think the lament of Jesus should *instruct all those who would now come to Him as to the manner of their approach*. While I appealed to you just now were there any who said, "I would fain come to Jesus, but how shall I come"? The answer is—come with sorrow and with prayer, even as it is written, "they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." As Jesus meets you so meet Him. He shows you in what fashion to return, in what array to draw near to your Redeemer, for He comes to you clothed in no robes but those of mourning, adorned with no jewels but the pearls of His tears. Come to Him in the garments of humiliation, mourning for your sin. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Penitential sorrow works life into men. Only come to Jesus and tell Him you have sinned, and are ashamed, and fain would cease to do evil, and learn to do well. Come in all your misery and degradation, in all your consciousness of hell-desert. Come in sorrow to the Man of sorrows who is even now on the road to meet you. He has said, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out," and He will not forfeit His Word.

God bless these feeble words concerning the inner emotions of my Lord, and may the Holy Spirit again rest upon us while we further pursue the subject into another field.

II. We are now to consider OUR LORD'S VERBAL LAMENTATIONS.

These are recorded in the following words—"Oh that you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace! but now they are hid from your eyes."

First, notice, He laments over *the fault by which they perished*—“Oh that you had known.” Ignorance, willful ignorance, was their ruin. “Oh that you had known.” They did not know what they might have known, what they ought to have known, they did not know their God. “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not consider.” They knew not God, they knew not God’s only Son, they knew not Him who came in mercy to them with nothing but love upon His lips. Oh, but this is the pity, that the light is come into the world and men will not have it, but love darkness rather than light.

Alas, I fear that some of my hearers live in the light, and will not see. There are none so deaf as those that will not hear, and none so blind as those that will not see, and yet there are such in all Christian congregations, who do not know and will not know. God says, “Oh that you had hearkened to my commandments, then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.” Our Lord lamented over the inhabitants of Jerusalem for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would have none of His counsel, they despised His reproof. Willful ignorance led to obstinate unbelief, they chose to die in the dark rather than accept the light of the Son of God.

The Lord laments *the bliss which they had lost*, the peace which could not be theirs. “Oh that you had known the things that belong unto your peace.” The name of that city was as we know Jerusalem, which being interpreted, signifies a vision of peace. They that looked upon it saw before them a vision of peace. But, alas, Jerusalem had lost its “salem,” or peace, and become a vision only because she did not know and would not know her God.

Oh men and women that know not God, you have lost peace, even now you are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. “There is no peace, says my God, unto the wicked.” Oh what joys you might have had! The delights of pardoned sin, the bliss of conscious safety, the joy of communion with God, the rapture of fellowship with Christ Jesus, the heavenly expectation of infinite glory, all might have been yours, but you have put them away from you. The Lord says of you, as of Israel of old, “O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I would soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand upon their adversaries.”

God would have revealed to you by His Spirit brighter things than eye has seen, and sweeter joys than ear has heard, for if you had been willing and obedient you should have eaten the fat of the land of His promise. You are losers, you are awful losers by not being reconciled to God, and you will be worse losers yet, for that false peace which now stands you in the stead of true peace, and beguiles and fascinates you, will depart like the mirage of the desert, and leave you on the arid sands of despair, to seek for rest and find it not. Soon shall a terrible sound be in your ears of the approaching vengeance of God, and there shall be for you no place of refuge.

When the Lord thought of what they had lost, He cried, “Oh that you had known!” I feel ashamed to repeat His words because I cannot repeat them in the tone He used. Oh, to hear Jesus say these words! I think it might melt a heart of stone! But no. I am mistaken, even that would not do it, for those who did hear Him were not melted nor reclaimed, but went on their way to their doom as they had done before. How hardened are the men who can trample on a Redeemer’s tears! What wonder that they find a hell where not a drop of water can ever cool their parched tongues, tormented in the flames! If men are resolved to be damned, it is evident that the tears of the best, the most perfect of men cannot stop them. Woe is me! This is deeper cause for tears than all else besides, that men should be so desperately set on mischief that nothing but Omnipotence will stop them from eternal suicide!

But our Lord also lamented over *the persons who had lost peace*. Observe that He says—“Oh that *you* had known, *even you*. You are Jerusalem, the favored city. It is little that Egypt did not know, that Tyre and Sidon did not know, but that *you* should not know!”

Ah, friends, if Jesus were here this morning, He might weep over some of you and say—“Oh that you had known, *even you*.” You were a lovely child! Even in your earliest days you were fond of everything good and gracious, you were taken to the place of worship, and sat on your mother’s knee,

pleased to be there. Do you remember the minister's name that you used to lisp with delight, the texts you repeated, and the hymns you sang? You grew up to be a lad right full of promise, and all felt sure that you would be a Christian. What exhortations your father, who is now in heaven, gave you! And she that bare you and loved you till she passed away, how she prayed and pleaded for you!

Some of you have been sitting here, or in some other place where Christ is preached, for a very long time, and you have often been very near to the kingdom, and yet you are not in it. You have come right up to the edge of the border land, but you have not crossed the line. You are not far from the kingdom of God, but you lack one thing—the one essential point of decision for Christ. “Oh that you had known, even *you!*” You are always ready to help the cause of God with your purse, for you take an interest in every good work, you cannot bear blasphemy or infidelity, and yet you are not saved.

There are a thousand things that are hopeful about you, but there is one thing which damps our hope, for you always procrastinate, and know not how to use your present opportunity. Jesus bids you use “this your day,” but you linger and delay. Today is God's accepted time, postpone no longer the hour of decision. Alas, that *you* should perish! Shall the child of such a mother be lost? Shall the son of such a father be driven down to hell? I cannot bear it. God have mercy on you, sons and daughters of Christian parents! You that have been enriched with Christian privileges, why will you die? Young man, so promising but yet so undecided, it makes the Savior Himself weep that you, even you, should still refuse to know the things that make for your peace.

Our Lord wept because of *the opportunity which they had neglected*. He said, “At least in this your day.” It was such a favored day, they aforetime had been warned by holy men, but now they had the Son of God Himself to preach to them. It was a day of miracles of mercy, a day of the unveiling of Gospel grace, and yet they would not have Christ though He had come so near to them, and it was a day of merciful visitation such as other nations had not known. Perhaps today also may be a day of visitation to some of you. Shall we have to lament, “Oh that you had known, even you, at least in this your day”—in this Sabbath day, this day of power, this day of the Spirit.

Oh now you now weep, and I perceive you feel some tender touches of the Spirit's power, do not resist Him and cause this day also to pass away unimproved. “The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and you are not saved,” and has the autumn closed, and shall the winter come and go, and shall these days in which the Spirit visits men all depart till God shall declare that it does not become the dignity of His Spirit to always strive with flesh, and therefore He shall cease His operations and leave men to their own devices.

Oh, souls, I pray you think of Christ weeping because revival days and Sabbath days are being wasted by you. Do not in these best of days commit the worst of sins by still refusing to receive the Gospel of God.

The Lord Jesus mourned again because *He saw the blindness which had stolen over them*. They had shut their eyes so fast that now they could not see, their ears which they had stopped had become dull and heavy, their hearts which they had hardened had waxen gross, so that they could not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor feel in their hearts, nor be converted that He should heal them. Why, the truth was as plain as the sun in the heavens, and yet they could not see it, and so is the Gospel at this hour to many of you, and yet you perceive it not.

There is nothing plainer than the plan of salvation by looking unto Jesus, and yet many men have gone on so long resisting the sweetness and light of the Spirit of God that they cannot now see the Lord Jesus who is as the sun in the heavens. The kindest friends have put the Gospel before them in a way that has enlightened others, but it has not affected them, they still say, “I cannot see it!” O you blind ones, take heed lest this has come upon you, “Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish.” Christ groans because the things which belonged to the peace of Jerusalem were hid from their eyes as a punishment for refusing to see.

Lastly, we know that the great flood gates of Christ's grief were pulled up because of *the ruin which He foresaw*. It is worth any man's while to read the story of the destruction of Jerusalem as it is told by

Josephus, it is the most harrowing of all records written by human pen, it remains the tragedy of tragedies, there never was and there never will be anything comparable to it, the people died of famine and of pestilence, and fell by thousands beneath the swords of their own countrymen. Women devoured the flesh of their own children, and men raged against each other with the fury of beasts. All ills seemed to meet in that doomed city, it was filled within with horrors and surrounded without by terrors. Portents amazed the sky both day and night. There was no escape, neither would the frenzied people accept mercy. The city itself was the banqueting hall of death.

Josephus says, "All hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress, and devour the people by whole houses and families, the upper rooms were full of women and infants that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children, also, and the young men wandered about the market places like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them. For a time the dead were buried, but afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the wall into the valleys beneath. When Titus, on going his rounds along these valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan, and spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness this was not his doing."

There is nothing in history to exceed this horror. But even this is nothing compared with the destruction of a soul. A man might look with complacency upon a dying body if he knew that within it was a soul that would live eternally in bliss and cause the body to rise again to equal joy, but for a soul to die is a catastrophe so terrible that the heavens might be clothed with sackcloth for its funeral. There is a death which never ends, the separation of the soul from God, which is the completest of all deaths. The separation of the soul from the body is but, as it were, a prelude and type of the far more dreadful death, the separation of the soul from God. Banished from hope, existing but not living, and that forever, what a condition this must be!

I shall draw no picture, words fail, but oh, my hearers, shall it be that any one among *you* shall ever know the meaning of the Savior's words, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment"? Will it ever be your lot to hear Him say—you who hear me this day, I mean—"Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels"? If we could mark any here to whom this doom will happen, we might make a ring around them and bring them home, rending our garments and tearing our hair, for it would be a far greater grief than if we knew that they would die by the sword or by famine in a foreign land. All ills are trifles compared with the second death.

Just a moment, while in conclusion I set forth our Savior's grief, as it expressed itself in other words, for those other words may help us to fresh light. You remember the passage in the twenty-third of Matthew, which I read in your hearing, where the Lord said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!"

Do you see His grace and grief? These people killed the prophets, and yet the Lord of prophets would have gathered them. His love had gone so far that even prophet-killers He would have gathered. Is not this a wonder that there should be grace enough in Christ to gather adulterers, thieves, liars, and to forgive and change them, and yet they will not be gathered? That He should be willing even to gather such base ones into a place of salvation, and yet should be refused?

The pith of it lies in this—"How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not." See, here, the case stands thus—I would, but you would not. This is a grief to love. If it had been a fact that *Christ* would not, then I could not understand His tears, but when He says "I would, but *you* would not," then I see the deep reason of His anguish. The failure of will is in you that perish, not in Christ who cries, "I would, but you would not." Ay, and He adds, "How often would I." Not once was He in a merciful mood, and pitiful to sinners for that time alone, but He cries, "How often would I have gathered."

Every prophet that had come to them had indicated an opportunity for their being gathered, and every time that Jesus preached there was a door set open for their salvation, but they would not be gathered, and so He foretells their fate in these words—“Your house shall be left unto you desolate.” Here is a painful sentence. Set the two words in contrast—“Gathered,” that is what you might have been, “desolate,” that is what you shall be, and Jesus weeps because of it.

“Gathered”—it is such a beautiful picture, you see the little chicks fleeing from danger, when they hear the cluck of the mother hen, they gather together, and they come under her wings. Did you ever hear that little, pretty cry they make when they are all together, with their heads buried in the feathers? How warm and comfortable they are! This is where you might have been, gathered under the warm breast of the eternal God, feeling His love with the rest of the people, joying and rejoicing in a communion of complete security, but inasmuch as you would not be gathered, see what you will be, “desolate,” without a friend, without a helper.

Then you will call to the saints, but they will not be able to help you. Say to them, “Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out,” but they must refuse you. Unto which of the holy ones will you turn? What angel will have pity upon you? Each cherub waves his fiery sword to keep you from the gate of paradise. There is no help for you in God when once you die without Him, no help for you anywhere. Desolate! Desolate! Desolate! Because you would not be gathered! Well does the tender Savior weep over men since they will perversely choose such a doom.

I do not feel as if you could close in gloom, I must flash before you a brighter light, though it be but for the last minute. The day hastens on when Christ will come a second time, and then He shall behold a new Jerusalem, a spiritual Jerusalem, built by divine hands. The foundations thereof are of jewels and the gates thereof are of pearl. How He will rejoice over it! He shall rest in His love, He shall rejoice over it with singing. He will shed no tears then, but He will see in the Jerusalem from above the travail of His soul, and He shall be satisfied.

When Zion shall be built up, the Lord shall appear in His glory, and the marriage of the Lamb will have come. Meanwhile, if any one of you who are not yet saved will come to Jesus, He will rejoice over you, for He takes pleasure in the stones of Zion, and favors the dust thereof, and if you are as little as Zion’s dust and as mean as her rubbish, He will rejoice over you. It is written that “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.”

Now, angels stand in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and there is joy in His heart over a single penitent. If only one sinner shall repent because of this sermon, my Lord will rejoice over Him. I, His servant, am, in my measure, intensely glad when a soul repents, but He shall have the chief joy, for His is the chief love. Who will now come to Jesus? Would God it might be the beloved son of a godly mother! Would God it might be you, my long hesitating hearer, for years a hearer but not a doer of the Word. May the Holy Spirit decide you at this very moment.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ISAIAH 1:1-20, MATTHEW 23:34-39, LUKE 19:36-44**

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—195, 265, 473

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